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This is a continuation application of Patent App. 056,501, filed May 3, 1993, which was a continuation of Patent App. 849,226, filed March 10, 1992, which was a continuation of Patent App. 588,126, filed Sept. 25, 1990, which was a continuation of Patent App. 096, 096, filed Sept. 11, 1987, which was a continuation-in-part of Patent App. 829, 531, filed Feb. 14, 1986, which was a continuation of Patent app. 317,519, filed Nov. 3, 1981.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to an integrated system of programming communication and involves the fields of computer processing, computer communications, television, radio, and other electronic communications; the fields of automating the handling, recording, and retransmitting of television, radio, computer, and other electronically transmitted programming; and the fields of regulating, metering, and monitoring the availability, use, and usage of such programming.

For years, television has been recognized as a most powerful medium for communicating ideas. And television is so-called "user-friendly"; that is, despite technical complexity, television is easy for subscribers to use.

Radio and electronic print services such as stock brokers' so-called "tickers" and "broad tapes" are also powerful, user friendly mass media. (Hereinafter, the electronic print mass medium is called, "broadcast print.")

But television, radio, and broadcast print are only mass media. Program content is the same for every viewer. Occasionally one viewer may see, hear, or read information of specific relevance to him (as happens when a guest on a television talk show turns to the camera and says, "Hi, Mom"), but such electronic media have no capacity for conveying user specific information simultaneously to each user.

For years, computers have been recognized as having unsurpassed capacity for processing and displaying user specific information.

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